

Claims

1. A messaging system comprising at least one distributed front-end messaging system and a centralized data store associated with said at least one distributed front-end messaging system, in which system the centralized data store includes means for storing data associated with users of the at least one distributed front-end messaging system, the at least one distributed front-end messaging system further including a respective at least one cache means for storing at least a portion of the centralized data associated with users of said at least one distributed front-end messaging system such that at least one messaging function can be provided to users of said at least one distributed front-end messaging system in dependence on the data stored in said cache means.
2. A messaging system according to claim 1 wherein there is provided a plurality of distributed front-end messaging systems each associated with a respective plurality of users and each including a cache means, wherein the centralized data store is adapted to store data associated with all users of said front-end messaging systems.
3. A messaging system according to claim 1 wherein there is further provided a centralized front-end messaging system associated with said centralized data store.
4. A messaging system according to claim 3 wherein the centralized front-end messaging system is associated with a plurality of users, data associated with said users being stored in the centralized data store.
5. A messaging system according to claim 3 wherein the centralized frontend messaging system provides at least one messaging function for users of said at least one distributed front-end messaging system.
6. A messaging system according to claim 5 wherein the centralized front-end messaging system is adapted to identify the front-end messaging system of a user.
7. A messaging system according to claim 6 wherein the centralized messaging system is adapted to identify the front-end messaging system of a user in dependence on a called number, a calling number, or a unique user identifier.
8. A messaging system according to claim 5 wherein the centralized messaging system provides access to all stored data associated with said at least one distributed front-end messaging system associated with the user.

9. A messaging system according to claim 1 wherein the centralized data store stores configuration data and message data associated with all users.

10. A messaging system according to claim 1 wherein the at least one messaging function includes call answering.

5 11. A messaging system according to claim 5 wherein said at least one messaging function is a subscriber access function.

12. A messaging system according to claim 1 wherein each front-end messaging system is associated with a respective voice mail domain.

10 13. A messaging system of claim 1 wherein each front-end messaging system is associated with a telecommunications switch.

14. A method of configuring a messaging system comprising: storing, at a centralized location, data associated with all users of the messaging system; storing, at at least one distributed location, at least part of said data associated with users at the at least one distributed location, and providing at least one messaging function to users at the at  
15 least one distributed front-end messaging system in dependence on the data stored at the distributed location.

15. A method according to claim 14 wherein the step of storing the data at said at least one distributed location comprises the step of caching the data at the centralized location.

20 16. A method according to claim 14 comprising the step of providing at least one messaging function to users at the at least one distributed front-end messaging system in dependence on data stored at the centralized locations.

17. A method according to claim 16 wherein further comprising the step of accessing the centralized location directly.